



city of
greenville

News Release

CITY HOSTS NEW SUMMER COMMUNITY YOUTH BASEBALL LEAGUE

(Greenville SC) Earlier this month, the City of Greenville launched a new Community Youth Baseball League designed to provide opportunities for children to practice and play baseball at their neighborhood parks. The league, which includes 17 teams and approximately 200 children, features a Minors Division for children ages seven to nine and a Majors Division for children ages 10 to 12. Participation in the league is free and most of the teams are comprised of children from the City's summer day camp programs and Greenville County's community center day camps. Children from the Greater Sullivan neighborhood, the community surrounding the Juanita Butler Community Center, also participate in the league. Games are played on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and during the day on Fridays at the following neighborhood ball fields: Juanita Butler Community Center, Nicholtown Community Center, North Main Rotary Park (Bobby Pearce Community Center) and West Greenville Community Center.

This Thursday, August 1 at 6:30 p.m., the Juanita Butler Cardinals will take on the Nicholtown Mets at the Juanita Butler Community Center baseball field. According to Pam Davis, the City's recreation programs manager, the City and the Greater Sullivan community have planned a fun, family-friendly night and the public is invited and encouraged to attend. In addition to the baseball game, there will also be food, and Mobi-Rec, the City's new mobile recreation vehicle, will be on-hand to provide games and activities for children of all ages.

On Saturday, August 3, beginning at 9:30 a.m., the City will host a Baseball Jamboree at the Juanita Butler Community Center baseball field and teams in the league will play 45-minute games throughout the day.

According to Dana Souza, the City's parks and recreation department director, when the Recreation staff developed the concept for the league two years ago, they had three goals in mind. The first goal was to provide an opportunity for all children in Greenville to play baseball within their neighborhoods at low or no cost by removing barriers such as financial and transportation constraints. Next, they wanted to be sure the program was fun and active so children would look

forward to playing. Finally, they wanted to activate the neighborhood community centers and fields so families and residents could enjoy an evening cheering on the children and instilling community pride. "At this point, we feel we have succeeded in these areas and are grateful to our partners who have helped us develop this program," said Souza. "This is one of the most exciting programs I have ever been involved in and I expect we will have more interest and participation in future years."

The season began on July 11, and holding evening games has enabled participants' families and neighborhood residents to attend and show their support. Some games have attracted as many as 150 to 200 spectators. According to Shondra Nix, a Nicholtown resident whose son plays for the Nicholtown Mets, she is impressed with the interest that the league has brought to the community. "I've actually seen neighbors without children involved in the program coming out to support the neighborhood youth," said Nix. "My son, DJ, loves playing in the league, and I definitely feel like this is something we should keep the kids involved in from here on out."

Members of the Greenville Alumni Chapter of the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity have worked with City staff to develop the program concept and recruit and coach program participants. The Juanita Butler team is coached by Judge Horace Butler, who is the son of Juanita Butler and a member of the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity. Judge Butler was introduced to baseball at a young age by his dad, Horace Butler, Senior, who at the time was the president of the Greater Sullivan Street Association. "The Juanita Butler Community Center, which is named after my mother, had just been built, and dad went into his own pocket to start a baseball team called the JB's," said Butler. "We never played any real games, but his dream was realized, and the next year the City of Greenville started little league baseball." According to Butler, their first official team was the Sertoma Cardinals. Butlers says at some point, the league was dissolved, but he always had a desire to bring baseball back to the inner city. "This program and league is a dream come true not only for me, but for my parents," said Butler. "I hope it will keep youth out of trouble while out of school and beyond and I pray it promotes unity, fellowship and the love of the game not only in the youth, but also in our communities as it did for me and my peers in years past."

For more information, contact Pam Davis at 467-8008 or Cameron Campbell, athletic programs coordinator, at 467-3238.

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